INTERPARLIAMENTARY HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM

A Joint Letter from Members of the UNITED STATES CONGRESS and the JAPANESE DIET

Dear Mr. Secretary-General,

As Members of the United States Congress and the Japanese Diet, we would like to offer you our conglatulations on your assumption of the post of Secretary-General. We wish you well as you face a variety of challenging international issues.

On this occasion, we are writing you about the situation in East Timor. As you are aware, East Timor was invaded by Indonesia in 1975. At least 100,000 and perhaps as many as 200,000 people out of a population of nearly 700,000 are believed to have died as a consequence of Indonesia's invasion and occupation of the former Portuguese colony. Amnesty International and other human rights organizations continue to report executions, torture, arbitrary arrests, suppression of freedom of speech, and other human rights abuses.

After many years of such reports, on November 12, 1991, Indonesian troops opened fire on a peaceful demonstration; at least 50 and perhaps more than 200 people are reported to have died. We regard this tragic incident as the culmination of a 16-year-long history of repression in East Timor, and believe that there must be an urgent and concerted international effort, not only to clarify the truth regarding the incident, but also to arrive at a fundamental solution to the East Timor problem itself.

We were gratified at your efforts to dispatch your envoy, Mr. Amos Wako to Jakarta and Dili. However, in the absence of specific follow-up measures, we fear that the fruit of this mission will be dissipated.

In this regard, we would like to propose the following:

1) Mr. Wako's report should be made public. Measures should be taken to protect those East Timorese and Indonesians who gave information on human rights abuses in East Timor to Mr. Wako, as well as to the UN Commission on Human Rights and to other human rights organizations.

2) The establishment of a United Nations presence in East Timor to monitor the human rights situation. This is especially important in view of authoritative reports of an atmosphere of terror that has prevailed in East Timor since the incident of November 12, 1991. This UN mission should investigate the treatment of those detained by the Indonesian military, both in connection with the November 12th massacre and events prior to it as well as thereafter, and the situation with regard to the trials of those who have been charged. The mission should confirm the identity of survivors of the November 12th incident, with reference to the lists of dead and wounded that have been released by international human rights organizations and others.

3) The Indonesian Government should be urged by you to fully respect and implement the decision of the UN Commission on Human Rights issued as a consensus declaration on March 4th, 1992, calling on the Indonesian Government 'to release those not involved in violent activities without delay' and 'to facilitate access to East Timor for additional humanitarian organizations and for human rights organizations' in which we believe the above proposed UN mission on human rights to be included. It should be stressed that Indonesia herself, as a member of the UNCHR, expressly subscribed to that consensus statement.

4) A clear public call to negotiations should be addressed by you to the three parties directly involved in the East Timor questions, namely Portugal, Indonesia and representatives of the East Timorese. By establishing now a highly visible profile as mediator in this issue, your actions would provide a rallying point around which neutral governments could focus consultative diplomatic activities.

5) Initiation of concrete steps to enable the people of East Timor to freely and fairly exercise their right to self-determination, a right affirmed by General Assembly and Security Council resolutions. This would involve a referendum held under the auspices of the United Nations.

We conclude with a pledge to call on our respective governments to cooperate with you in these tasks, and hold high hopes that under your leadership the international community can contribute to a solution to this issue.

Sincerely yours,

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